

Taking Care--Documenting the Occupational Culture of Home Care Workers
Archie Green Fellows Project, 2014-2015
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**Tom Wilson interview, 2015-04-19 : interview conducted by Nathan J. Moore
and Donald Eugene Stacy**

INTERVIEW LOG

Olga Yakimchuk, Interview
00:23:11

00:00:00 Consent to interview. Olga Yakimchuk, I live in Portland. I have been a home care worker for 15 years. I have been taking care of my husband's parents. Back in 2000, when we came from Ukraine, Home Care Workers Commission was just established. Someone suggested that these jobs existed, and I applied.

00:02:43 In Ukraine, I was a nurse in a hospital. Not a charge nurse, just a nurse.

00:03:10 Differences between the two jobs? They are very alike, because I used to work with elderly, very sick people.

00:03:54 Special skills or abilities? Of course, if someone doesn't like elderly, or don't like to be helpful won't be able to do the job.

00:04:19 Knew job already? My parents-in-law have been ill for a long time and I took care of them in my country, too. I had to find time for it. Here the government compensates me for taking care of them.

00:05:57 Difference between the hospital and home care work? Yes, these are your parents, or parents-in-law. Patients in hospital are not blood-related.

00:07:41 Hard to separate work life/home life? Yes, of course it is difficult. They are always there waiting for me to come. I go three times a day, before breakfast, at lunch, and later in the evening. It takes a lot of time, but I do the best I can. Incorporate their activities into their activities? Yes.

00:09:54 How handle intimate tasks like bathing? I keep a picture in my mind of how my parents had to bath and clean us. This helps me when I have to do these tasks.

00:11:05 Story? Taking care of elderly is very gratifying. God rewards you. When they are in the hospital, for example, you do everything to make them comfortable.

00:12:09 What is rewarding? They are so happy to see me. When I arrive they say "My sun came out!"

00:13:09 Challenging? When they are sick, for example, my female client has problems with her hearing. We go to the doctor, some things help for a while and then not so much. You find yourself awake at night thinking, "what else can I do to help them?"

00:14:20 Union? Yes, all the meetings and classes. At first I didn't do all of the tasks correctly. Yes, it was written, but you understand much more when it is demonstrated. We all know about our rights, we went to Salem in 2013, lots of us attending. Wearing purple? Yes.

00:15:57 Something you would say to someone who doesn't know about home care work? Taking care of elderly is very noble.

00:17:10 I always feel it our duty to help elderly, and when you run out of strength, you ask for strength from God. God just help us get through today. For example--Grandfather was very sick, many surgeries, hours and hours waiting in clinics. You ask God to give you strength.

00:18:33 Sense of humor important? I have a good sense of humor, always try to encourage them, support them as much as I can with it. I say to them "say thanks to god that you are still walking"! I comfort them.

00:19:32 Hobbies or other things to re-energize? I have four children, 3 are married and one 17 years old, and 5 grandchildren.

00:20:54 What kind of person would you hire as a home care person - what qualities? Honest person, not a cheat or thief, not a smoker. And of course, do they have skills? Did they go through the trainings, I think this is a necessity. You learn a lot in the trainings, like CPR. I go about six times a year. When the Home Care Commission started, it was only giving classes in English, but now in Russian, also. They are very good.

00:23:10 End of interview.